

August 29, 2025

Historic District Commission

Tiffany Franklin, *Chair*

Allan Machielse, *Vice Chair*

James Hamilton

Adrea Simmons

William Marquez

Marques King

Katy Trudeau

Erma Henderson Auditorium (13th Floor)

2 Woodward Ave

Detroit, MI 48226

RE: 14501-14523 E. Jefferson, Detroit, MI 48215 (collectively, the “Properties”)

Dear Historic District Commission:

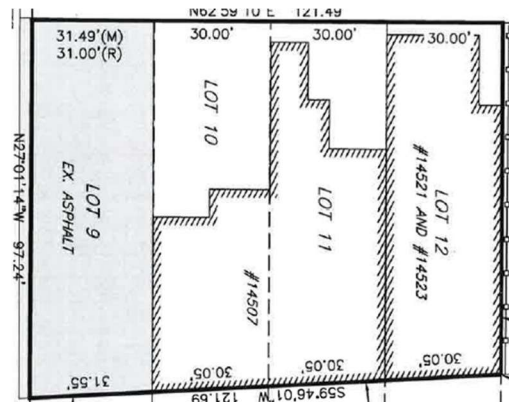
My name is Steven Nofar, and I am the member/manager of Real Detroit Properties, LLC (“RDP”). RDP is the owner of the above-referenced Properties, which were acquired in 2016.

I. Identification of the Properties.

Lot 9, is a gravel parking lot

Lots 10 & 11, these structures were combined as 1 building in 1986 per the attached survey on **Exhibit A** and have a legal address of 14501 E. Jefferson and parcel identification number 21000597-9. Per the survey, the former addresses were 14501-14507 E. Jefferson. These structures share the same floor, ceiling and walls, all of which have lost their structural integrity.

Lot 12, which is a single use building (parcel identification number 21000600). See attached survey on **Exhibit B**.



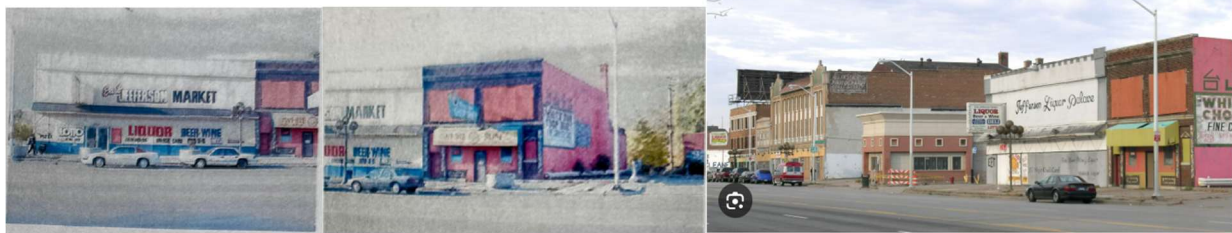
II. Lots 10 & 11 (formerly East Jefferson Market):

On August 28, 2025 I met with Garrick Landsberg of the City of Detroit Historic Preservation at the Properties and he stated that building 14501 E. Jefferson did offer much architectural significance and that the integrity of the building had become compromised.

Mr. Landsberg did say that he did not know what was behind the Dryvit front facia on the Lot 11 structure. So, I cut into the Dryvit on that structure and removed the Styrofoam to reveal that the façade was cinderblock material (See Exhibit C). Per the survey photos on Exhibits A & B (and photo snips below), you can see that the building structures on Lots 10 & 11 have had façade covering since the 1950's. In addition, all historical photos on the internet so similar building materials on the front facade.

Please note that per the City of Detroit Assessor's records, the structures on Lots 10 & 11 have one (1) address (14501 E. Jefferson) and one (1) parcel ID number and they share the same roof, floor, walls and utilities, all of which have compromised structural integrity.

Survey photo snips are below.



III. Lot 12 (formerly White Sun Chinese Restaurant).

The structure on Lot 12 is in better condition than the structures on Lots 10 & 11, but this structure also has lost its structural integrity as the roof has collapsed, there is a mechanical basement and the floor is compromised. This building does have colored tiles on the front facia. Per the Jefferson East Inc letter, we would preserve these tiles and incorporate them into a new development.

IV. Prior Repairs.

Over the years, RDP has retained (1) Prodigy Construction Inc, (2) Premier Property Services, (3) Consolidated Construction Services, (4) ESPW, LLC, (5) Triac Construction, (6) Environmental Services, and (7) Phil Wassaneer (East Jefferson resident for >40 years) to repair and maintain the Properties. However, due to age, weather conditions, and many acts of vandalism, the structural components have failed and the structures have been compromised and lost structural integrity.

V. East Jefferson Population Density. As you may be aware, more than 600 residential lots in the East Jefferson corridor are owned by one or more entities owned and managed by Melvin Washington. According to City of Detroit records, these ~600 residential lots were acquired largely during the Kwame Kilpatrick administration and have never been developed. As a result of the lack of population density, the commercial properties along Jefferson are largely vacant and per PPSM Realty, and Jefferson East Inc's study, commercial rental rates range from \$7-10, per foot. These lot rental rate make it financially and economically impossible and impractical to restore or rebuild in the area.

VI. **Commercial Rental Rates.**

Due the extremely low population density, commercial vacancies, and commercial rental rates, we are working with Jefferson East Inc to see if we can partner on the redevelopment of the Properties to apply for federal grants/credits. As you know, credits and incentives do not cover 100% of the cost and we are having a challenging time finding commercial lending institutions to fund the gap in financing as the commercial rental rates are so low.

VII. **Proposed Development after Demolition.**

After demolition, the Properties will have the debris removed, fill the basements with dirt making the lots flat land. RDP is working with Jefferson East Inc and others to plan the redevelopment of these Properties.

VIII. **Attachments.**

Exhibit A – Survey Lots 10 & 11

Exhibit B – Survey Lot 12

Exhibit C – Picture of Lot 11 Cinderblock facia

Exhibit D – Ariel photo of Jefferson Chalmers – lack of population density

Exhibit E – Report from Structural Engineer, Gregory Sarkisian

Exhibit F – Report from Jefferson East Inc in support of demolition

Exhibit G – Report from construction company, Prodigy Holdings Inc.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully,
REAL DETROIT PROPERTIES, LLC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Nofar', with a stylized, cursive script.

Steven Nofar
Member/Manager
steve@nofarlaw.com
Cell: 248-217-462

Enclosure: Exhibits A through F.

Exhibit A – Survey Lots 10 & 11

State of Michigan Historic Preservation Office
Intensive Level Survey
Jefferson East Survey

Address

Street: 14521 E Jefferson ZIP 48215-
City: Detroit County: Wayne
Current Name: White Sun Chop Suey
Historic Name: The White Sun Cafe

Evaluations

Contributes to:
NR Eligible: NR Eligible
Contributing: Contributing Site
SHPO Evaluation:

Resources on Property/Status

Historic Use: COMMERCE/TRADE (CT)
Current Use: VACANT/NOT IN USE
Owner Type: Private

Main Building

Foundation

1. Brick
2. Stone
- 3.

Wall:

1. Brick
2. Ceramic Tile
- 3.

Roof:

1. N/A
- 2.
- 3.

Other:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Architectural Classification: Commercial Style

Material Notes:

The exposed surfaces of the brick used on the facade are scored in a cross-hatch pattern. Based on the glazes, the shapes, and the colors of the tiles, it is likely that the tiles used on the facade originated from the Pewabic Pottery in Detroit.

Description:

14521 East Jefferson is a two-story brick building with a rectangular footprint. It is considered a two-part commercial block with a single story lower zone at street level consisting of storefront space and a single story upper level consisting of offices/residential space above. The symmetrically arranged facade is composed of two large window openings on the second floor that have stone sills and label moulding. The openings are now covered; it is likely that each window opening contained a grouping of three windows. The ground floor is composed of a center doorway flanked by single window openings under a fabric awning bearing the name of the restaurant. The entrance to the upstairs spaces is at the west end of the facade; the opposite end has an elevated window opening with a sill and gable-shaped hood in cast stone. The front wall of the ground floor sits slightly behind four brick piers that enframe the facade, flanking the window and doorway on the ends of the building. In what appears to be a later application, panels are inset with colored decorative tiles that have been installed along the length of the piers and outlining the bottom panels of the original storefront windows, now covered. A stone capstone, cornice and stringcourse are complemented by cast stone blocks at the foundation.

Other Buildings/Features:

Significant Persons:

Statement of Significance

The building permit was issued in 1926 to J. Oldenkamp, a local real estate developer, for the construction of a two-story brick structure with dimensions of 30 x 70 to contain a restaurant, four offices and one apartment. The cost was estimated at \$13,400. According to the 1927/28 city directory, the restaurant, The White Sun Cafe, occupied the ground floor space. Chow Y(ee) Leon, was the proprietor. Taylor & Trimble and Miller & Company, real estate agencies, the Stuart Letter Shop, and F.C. Moeller, a contractor, occupied the second floor offices. The White Sun Cafe was



Photo

Filename: East Jefferson\14521 East Jefferson.JPG

Roll: Frame:

View: north

Credit: Rebecca Savage

Caption: 14521 E. Jefferson

Period of Significance:

Area of Significance:

- 1 Commerce
- 2 Architecture
- 3

Arch/Builder: J. Oldenkamp, builder

Date Built: c. 1926

**State of Michigan Historic Preservation Office
Intensive Level Survey**

Jefferson East Survey

still occupying the same location in 1974; directories had listed the proprietor as Ben C. Leong, Bennie Leon, and Ben C. Leon, either the same person or a member of Chow Y. Leon's family. According to city directories, Mr. Leon lived above the restaurant during the 1930s and still resided there in the early 1970s. The White Sun Cafe changed to White Sun Chop Suey after 1974 and continued to operate under that name until late 2000 when the restaurant closed. According to a member of the Leong family, "White Sun" is a translation of the name of the village in southern China from which Chow Yee Leon(g) and many subsequent family members came. This building appeared in the film "8 Mile" in 2002.

References:

Detroit Building Permit #16439, 8/31/26. Detroit city directory 1927/28 - 1974.

Surveyor's Comments:

Contributes to the proposed historic designation of the Jefferson-Chalmers Historic Business District

Exhibit B – Survey Lot 12

**State of Michigan Historic Preservation Office
Intensive Level Survey
Jefferson East Survey**

Address

Street: 14507 E Jefferson
City: Detroit County: Wayne ZIP 48215-
Current Name: n/a
Historic Name: n/a

Evaluations

Contributes to:
NR Eligible: Not NR Eligible
Contributing: Non-Contributing Site
SHPO Evaluation:

Resources on Property/Status

Historic Use: COMMERCE/TRADE (CT)
Current Use: CT/business
Owner Type: Private

Main Building

Foundation

1. Brick
- 2.
- 3.

Wall:

1. Brick
2. Wood
- 3.

Roof:

1. N/A
- 2.
- 3.

Other:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Period of Significance:

Area of Significance:

- 1 Commerce
- 2
- 3

Arch/Builder: n/a

Date Built: c. 1915, 1924

Architectural Classification: Other

Material Notes:

Description:

The building at 14507 East Jefferson is a two-story building that is comprised of two significantly altered, two-story brick buildings constructed on the two lots on which it stands. The facade is covered with rough finished wooden sheets and panels that have been painted. The second story windows have been covered and the bare wall provides space for the name of the business within. The ground floor has an offset full glass double door enframed in metal under a full-width pent roof. The facade is covered with wood clapboards which form a cornice along the flat parapet. The west elevation is clad in rectangular sheets of wood paneling that have been installed on a diagonal.

Other Buildings/Features:

Significant Persons:

Statement of Significance

The current building that houses the East Jefferson Market is comprised of two significantly altered, two-story brick buildings constructed in 1915 and 1924 on Lots 10 and 11. The owner of Lot 10 was Ernest J. Stark who purchased the property in 1913 from Kasper J. Schwemler. Schwemler bought Lot 10 and also the lot next to it, Lot 9, on which the parking lot is located, in 1912 from the widow of John Moning. The couple had owned the lots since 1894. The permit for construction on Lot 10 was issued in 1915 for a brick store and dwelling. Although not stated on the permit, it may be assumed that Schwemler was issued the permit and owned the building. According to the 1916 city directory, the storefront was occupied by the Kappaz Market, Nicholas Kbloz owner. The market remained in this location into the early 1970s. Nicholas Kbloz (aka Kabaz/Kappaz) was succeeded by George Kappaz in the early 1960s. Nicholas Kappaz lived above the store for many of those years during which time a brick addition was built at the rear of the market (1930). Nicholas Kappaz purchased the property from Amelia M. Stark in 1940. The building that makes up the second part of the current building was constructed in 1924 on Lot 11. In 1910, this lot was purchased from Elijah E. Bigelow by John B. Drexelius. Bigelow was the original purchaser of this lot and the lot next to it, Lot 12, when the land was subdivided by the J.S. Visger Land Co. in 1894.



Photo

Filename: East Jefferson\14507-19 East Jefferson.JPG

Roll: **Frame:**

View: north

Credit: Rebecca Savage

Caption: 14507-19 East Jefferson (pre-alterations)

State of Michigan Historic Preservation Office

Intensive Level Survey

Jefferson East Survey

In 1924 Samuel S. Kaplan and William P. Shoemaker purchased Lot 11 from Edward Burell who received the deed from Drexelius in 1915. Though not stated on the permit that was issued in 1924, it may be assumed that Kaplan and Shoemaker constructed the brick building on Lot 11. The building was to contain a store and an office. According to the 1925/26 city directory among the early tenants were J.L. McConachie, real estate, and W.C. Markham, construction, and the Yee Sing Laundry which, as the Hing Laundry, was still occupying the building in the mid-1960s. Attorneys, Megargle & Barrows, and Erie Rose leased space in the building from the early 1930s to late 1950s. According to the city records, the buildings on Lots 10 and 11 were combined in 1986 and their facades unified to appear as one building. The alley-facing rear walls of the East Jefferson Market reveal physical evidence of the original two buildings.

References:

Wayne County Registrar of Deeds. Detroit Building Permit #6671, 3/30/15 (Lot 10), #54052, 11/29/24 (Lot 11). Alterations: #33275A, 7/29/30, #30814, 2/11/86. Detroit city directories 1913 - 1974. George Kappaz: "East Siders Cry Foul Over Fox Creek Odor," 'Detroit News,' 9/17/60, 3A.

Surveyor's Comments:

Deemed non-contributing in its current altered state. Considering the full history and physical evidence of the original buildings, it is hoped that the original facades have been merely covered and could one day be rediscovered and restored. This building would be eligible for consideration at such a time .

Exhibit C – Picture of Lot 11 Cinderblock



Exhibit D – Ariel photo of Jefferson Chalmers – lack of population density

Notice the population density in Gross Pointe compared to Detroit. Ninety (90%) percent of those residential lots have been owned by Melvin Washington since Kwame Kilpatrick administration and have not yet been developed.

Notice the area covered by grass and not houses...

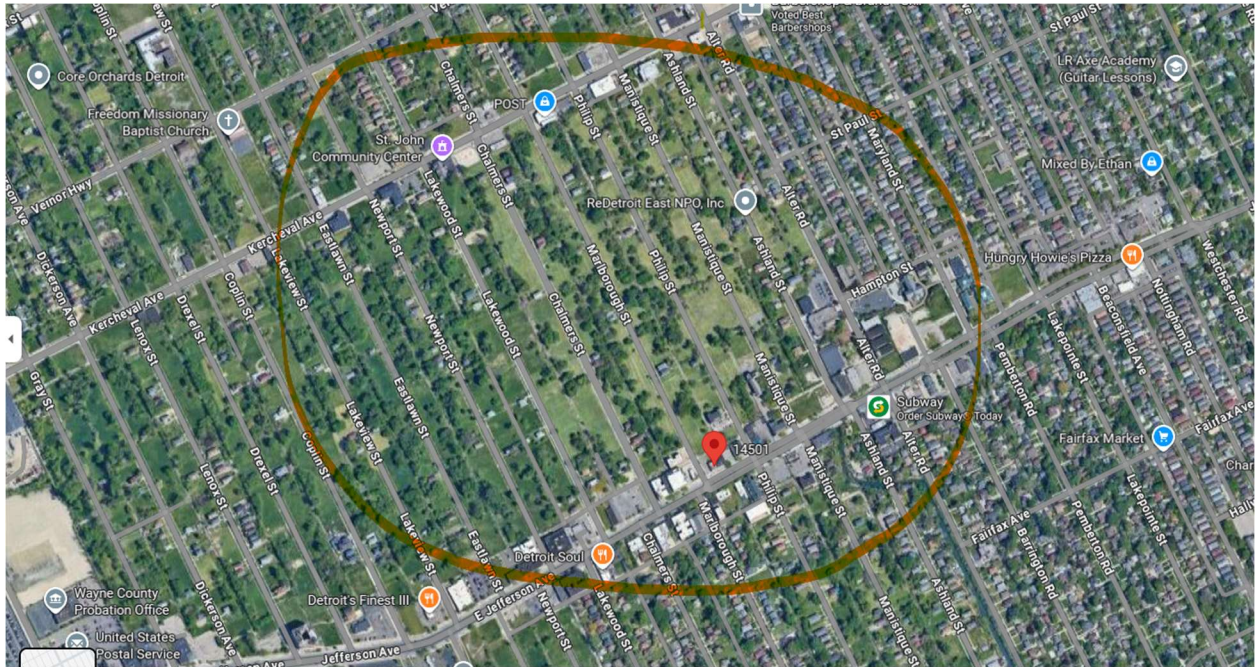
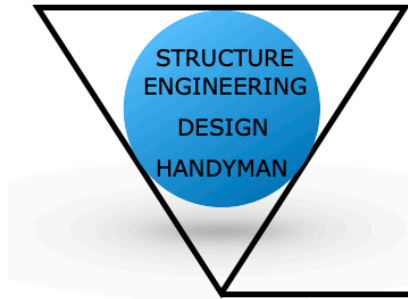


Exhibit E – Report from Structural Engineer, Gregory Sarkisian



SARK & ASSOCIATES

ENGINEER ♦ DESIGN ♦ BUILD

greg@sarkassoc.com

May 7, 2025

Mr. Steven Nofar
32600 Telegraph Rd, Ste 100
Bingham Farms, Michigan 48025

Dear Mr. Nofar:

RE: Structural Inspection of Buildings at 14501 & 14521 E Jefferson Ave, Detroit

Description and Scope of Work

The buildings are connected and are constructed with mostly concrete, masonry and wood materials. The buildings have been vacant for several years and are in a severe state of disrepair on the exterior and interior, and should be considered a hazard to public safety. The floors are a combination of concrete slab-on-grade and platform wood framing. The exterior is mostly brick with stone facade and trim details. Windows are missing and/or boarded over. It appears the interior was mostly plaster and lath. I inspected the exterior and the interior only from the entry doors. The building is currently unsafe for entry.

Foundation

The foundation is not visible for inspection. However, there are multiple locations with evidence of prior settlements. These are indicated by crack patterns in the brick mortar joints, and visible separations between buildings. The slab floors have buckled and have significant settlements.

Floor Framing

The framed floors are rotted and mostly collapsed and require full replacement.

Exterior Walls

Most of the framed walls have rotted wood that requires full replacement. The brick walls have significant water damage causing loose or empty mortar joints and decayed bricks, as well as corroded and distorted steel lintels over windows and doors. These walls would require full replacement, materials dependent on new architectural plans.

Roof

All of the roofs have either rotted wood or fully collapsed. These require full replacement.

Conclusions

The condition of these buildings is such that a full teardown and rebuild is recommended, for the following reasons:

- The buildings are currently unsafe for contractors to work on the interior and the roof.
- Reconstruction of the roof requires structurally sound and stable exterior walls, which do not exist.
- The exterior walls are not structurally sound and are unstable in the current condition.
- The foundation shows signs of past settlements and would require reconstruction of those specific areas.
- Other areas of the foundation can only be evaluated by excavation, which requires the exterior walls to be demolished.
- Interior load-bearing walls require reconstruction.

In conclusion, the buildings cannot be safely renovated and should be demolished to avoid becoming a more severe hazard to public safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service and if you have any questions with regards to this letter report please email me.

Sincerely,



Gregory Sarkisian, P.E.

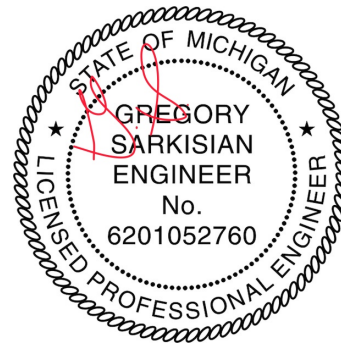


Exhibit F – Report from Jefferson East Inc in support of demolition



August 27th, 2025

Detroit Historic District Commission
Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
2 Woodward Avenue Suite 808
Detroit, MI 48226

RE: Demolition of 14501-14521 E. Jefferson

Dear Honorable Commission Members,

Jefferson East, Inc. (JEI) is supportive of efforts to demolish 14501 and 14521 E. Jefferson Ave. As the organization that established the Jefferson Chalmers Historic Business District in 2007 and that has successfully redeveloped four historic buildings in the district (14300 and 14628 E Jefferson & 910 and 1031 Marlborough), we do not often support such requests. The decision to support this request is based on several key factors:

1. Both buildings have experienced severe degradation and structural deterioration over the past several decades. In addition, 14501 was subjected to fire-bombing in 2008-2009 which lead to extensive fire damage.
2. Given the low retail rents in the area and high construction costs, the redevelopment of small historic structures is not economically feasible. Recently, JEI completed an analysis that indicated that in order to successfully rehab smaller historic retail buildings in the area, the properties would need to be able to command rents of more than \$37/square foot. Current retail rents in the historic Jefferson Chalmers Business District range between \$7-\$12/square foot.
3. In 2022, the City of Detroit elected to not implement an innovative economic development tool, a Targeted Redevelopment Area or TRA, for the historic Jefferson Chalmers Business District. This multi parcel Tax Increment Finance District would have generated more than \$94 million in support for the redevelopment of historic structures in the area and help fill the previously mentioned development gaps. Absent the TRA, JEI has shifted its economic development activities towards creating larger cleared sites that could be redeveloped into and/or support larger scale developments that have smaller development gaps. Demolition of 14501-14521 is in alignment with this new strategy.

While we are supportive of the demolition of these two blighted and dangerous structures, we would request that the historic tile that adorn the façade of 14521 E. Jefferson be preserved by the applicant so that they could be included in a future redevelopment project. JEI would be happy to receive and hold these tiles for their potential inclusion in several upcoming development projects within the historic Jefferson Chalmers Business District

Sincerely,

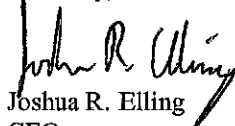

Joshua R. Elling
CEO

Exhibit G – Report from construction company, Prodigy Holdings Inc.